SECTION 2: **Trends Analysis**

The Trends Analysis identifies local, regional, and national trends and issues that are applicable to the update of the Land Use and Circulation Element. Trends and issues are put in perspective with Foster City's physical, demographic, economic, and locational conditions.

Some of the trends are quantifiable, such as changes in population characteristics. Other trends are less quantifiable and more cultural or social in nature such as trends in businesses, retailing, live/work, technology, and transportation.

Demographic Trends

Population

Foster City experienced the greatest rates of population growth in the 1970s and 1980s. By 1990, most of the residential land was developed, and there has been minimal population growth since.[1]

TABLE 2-1: POPULATION

Year	Population	10-year Increase
1970	9,522	
1980	23,287	244%
1990	28,176	21%
2000	28,803	2%
2010	30,567	6%

Ethnicity

While Foster City population growth has been relatively minimal since 1990, there have been changes to the ethnic composition of residents.[2] The proportion of residents who are white or black has declined, while the proportion who are Asian has increased. The Asian Indian population has been the fastest growing, increasing seven-fold from 1.0 percent to 8.6 percent from 1990 to 2008.

TABLE 2-2: ETHNICITY

	1990	2000	2008	Percent Change 1990-2008
White	73.5%	59.3%	50.5%	-31%
Black	3.2%	2.1%	1.8%	-44%
Chinese	11.4%	16.3%	16.8%	47%
Asian Indian	1.0%	5.7%	8.6%	760%
Filipino	3.4%	3.3%	6.9%	103%
Japanese	4.0%	4.6%	3.9%	-3%
Korean	0.9%	1.2%	2.6%	189%
Other Asian	0.8%	1.4%	2.5%	213%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.6%	0.6%	1.0%	67%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%	100%
Some Other Race (category added 2000)		1.2%	0.9%	
Two or More Races (category added 2000)		4.1%	4.2%	
No Response/Other	1.1%			
Total	100%	100%	100%	

[1] U.S. Census, 1990-2010
[2] U.S. Census, 1990-2000 and U.S. Census American Community Survey 2008. 2010 Census data for detailed ethnicity is not yet available.

Age

Since 1990, Foster City has seen increases in the proportion of children and teens (aged 0-19 years), older adults (aged 55-64 years), and seniors (65+ years). The proportion of middle-aged adults (aged 35-54 years) has remained relatively constant, while the proportion of young adults (aged 20-34 years) has declined.[3]

Interestingly, the proportion of residents who are childbearing age (primarily the 20-34 years cohort) has decreased, yet the the school population has increased. Some possible explanations may include larger families, single-parent households, and/or children raised by grandparents. It is also possible it is a demographic or reporting oddity that will be better explained with next round of census data. Some demographic data for "places" like Foster City will be out in May of this year, and additional data will be released in June.

TABLE 2-3: AGE OF POPULATION

	1990	2000	2008	Percent Change 1990-2008
0-19 years	22.8%	22.7%	26.3%	3.5%
20-34 years	26.6%	21.2%	16.4%	-10.2%
35-54 years	34.8%	34.6%	34.4%	-0.4%
55-64 years	8.9%	11.4%	11.7%	2.8%
65+ years	7.0%	10.1%	11.2%	4.2%

Household Types

The percentage of families with children increased five percent over the past decade, after having declined during the 1980s and remaining flat through the 1990s.[4]

TABLE 2-4: HOUSEHOLD TYPES

	1990	2000	2008	Percent Change 1990-2008
Families with Children	30.4%	30.5%	35.3%	5%
Families without Children	35.5%	37.7%	33.4%	-4%
Non-Families (single, or more than one unrelated)	34.2%	31.7%	31.2%	-1%

[3] U.S. Census, 1990-2000 and U.S. Census American Community Survey 2008. 2010 Census data for age distribution is not yet available.
[4] U.S. Census 1980-1990 and U.S. Census American Community Survey 2008

School Enrollment

Total school enrollment has grown steadily over the past ten years, from 2,607 students in all Foster City schools in the 2000-01 academic year to 3,028 students in 2009-10. [5]

TABLE 2-5: FOSTER CITY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

	2000-01	2009-10	Percent Increase
Audubon	468	629	34%
Brewer Island	474	675	42%
Foster City Elementary	734	772	5%
Bowditch	931	952	2%
	2,607	3,028	16%

School Performance

Over the past five years, academic performance in Foster City schools as measured by the Academic Performance Index (API) has increased. [6]

TABLE 2-6: ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE INDEX (API)

	2006	2010	Percent Increase
Audubon	872	908	4%
Brewer Island	937	952	2%
Foster City Elementary	898	952	6%
Bowditch	873	912	4%

[5] San Mateo-Foster City Elementary School District, 2010

[6] California Department of Education, Policy and Evaluation Division, 2010

Employment

Employment growth is forecast to return in San Mateo County by 2011. Total wage and salary jobs are not forecast to reach the 2000 peak until the next decade.[7] Between 2010 and 2015, the principal job creation occurs in the professional services, transportation and warehousing, construction, information, and retail trade sector. The largest employment losses come in the financial sector, which loses nearly 2,000 jobs, or 10 percent of the workforce from 2010 to 2015. [8]

TABLE 2-7: EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

Year	Jobs	5-Year Change
2000	18,480	
2005	14,230	-23%
2010	14,510	2%
2015	15,310	6%
2020	16,220	6%
2025	17,230	6%
2030	18,130	5%
2035	19,140	6%
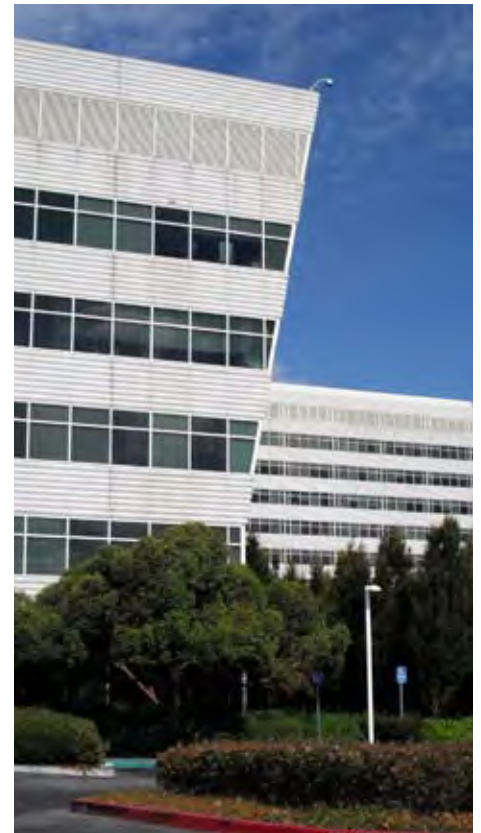
FIGURE 2-1: Projections of Jobs by Sector in Foster City (2000-2035)
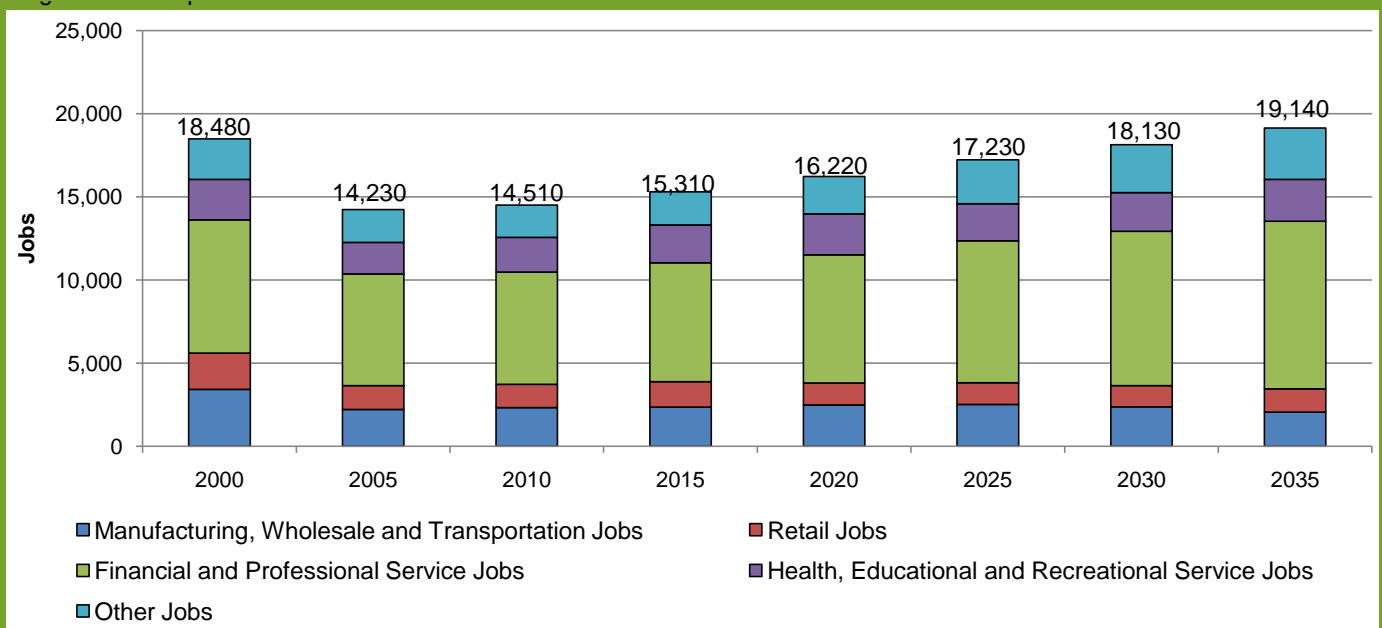
Source: Association of Bay Area Governments, Projections and Priorities: Building Momentum, 2009.

[7] Association of Bay Area Governments, Projections and Priorities: Building Momentum, 2009.
[8] California Department of Transportation 2011 county-by-county forecasts:
 http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/ote/socio_economic.html

"Smart Growth" emphasizes compact, livable neighborhoods.

Other important components of compact neighborhoods include mixed-use development, inclusion of affordable housing, and provision of well-designed parks and open spaces.

Transit-oriented development is often oriented to regional rail transit, but can also be served by Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) as illustrated above.

Economic and Social Trends

"Smart Growth"

"Smart growth" is an urban planning and transportation approach based on the concept of concentrating growth in compact, walkable urban centers to avoid sprawl. Smart growth advocates compact, transit-oriented, walkable, bicycle-friendly land use, including neighborhood schools, "complete streets" (see discussion of complete streets later in this chapter) and mixed-use development with a range of housing choices. Smart growth is intended to provide an alternative to urban sprawl, traffic congestion, disconnected neighborhoods, and urban decay. Smart growth values long-range, regional considerations of sustainability over a short-term focus.

Transportation and community planners began to promote the idea of compact cities and communities in the early 1970s. The cost and difficulty of acquiring land (particularly in already developed areas) to build and widen highways caused some politicians to reconsider basing transportation planning on motor vehicles. In more recent years smart growth has been considered a means for responding to climate change and scarcity of energy and natural resources.

Growth is "smart growth" to the extent that it includes the following elements:

Compact Neighborhoods

Compact, livable neighborhoods are a critical element of reducing urban sprawl and protecting the climate. Such a tactic includes adopting strategies and policies that focus housing and job growth into urban centers and neighborhood business districts, to create compact, walkable, and bike- and transit-friendly hubs. This sometimes requires local governmental bodies to implement policy and code changes that allow increased height and density, and regulations that reduce minimum parking requirements in favor of emphasizing walking, cycling, and transit use. Other important components of compact neighborhoods include mixed-use development, inclusion of affordable housing, and provision of well-designed parks and open spaces.

Transit-Oriented Development

Transit-oriented development (often referred to as "TOD") is defined as a residential or commercial area designed to maximize access to public transport. Mixed-use, compact neighborhoods tend to use transit at all times of the day so there is considerable overlap between TOD and compact neighborhoods. Many cities striving to implement better TOD strategies seek to secure funding to create new public transportation infrastructure and improve existing services. Other measures might include regional cooperation to increase efficiency and expand services, moving buses and trains more frequently through high-use areas, and pricing parking so to encourage people to utilize transit.

Pedestrian- and icycle-friendly design

Biking and walking instead of driving can reduce emissions, save money on fuel and maintenance, and foster a healthier population. Pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly improvements include bike lanes on main streets, an urban bike-trail system, bike parking, pedestrian crossings, and associated master plans.

Infill development

Infill development is the use of land within an already developed area for further construction, especially as part of a community redevelopment or growth management program or as part of smart growth. It focuses on the reuse and repositioning of obsolete or underutilized buildings and sites, urging densification to reduce the need for automobiles, encourage walking, and ultimately save energy.

Applicability to Foster City

As a master-planned community, Foster City incorporates a number of smart growth principles. Throughout the city, development is relatively compact compared to other suburban communities, and most residents live within walking distance of at least some services. There is a wide range of housing types, along with a mix of uses including commercial uses and employment. There is an extensive, well-used bicycle network, and well-designed parks and open spaces are abundant.

Some recent development proposals in Foster City embody smart growth principles on a project scale:

The Pilgrim-Triton project will include housing (both market rate and subsidized/affordable), live/work units, retail space, offices, and open space. The Mirabella project that had been proposed adjacent to the civic center had included senior housing units in a continuing care retirement community with retail and a public plaza. Although the project stalled in the economic downturn, the City has issued a Request For Proposals for the site with hopes of attracting a similar type of mixed-use development that incorporates smart growth principles.

The potential to further pursue smart growth planning in Foster City is limited by the scarcity of available vacant land. The Mirabella project site is the last remaining sizable vacant site in the city. The Pilgrim-Triton development is a redevelopment of previously developed properties, and future smart growth development would require similar infill redevelopment of previously developed parcels.

Pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly improvements include bike lanes on main streets, an urban bike-trail system, bike parking, pedestrian crossings, and associated master plans.

Infill development provides the opportunity to make more intensive use of scarce land as part of growth management program. The example above illustrates a supermarket with housing on the upper floors above.

In Foster City the Pilgrim-Triton project includes aspects of Smart Growth such as a mix of uses and pedestrian-oriented design.

BRT typically involves high-frequency service, dedicated bus-only lanes, and station platforms similar in design to rail transit facilities.

Foster City also faces the challenge of availability of transit to fulfill the transit-oriented aspect of smart growth. Additional intensification of development is not viable if it cannot be served by adequate transportation, and Foster City has already been reaching the upper threshold of accommodating automobiles at peak travel periods. Foster City is not situated along major fixed-route regional transit such as Caltrain and BART, so buses and shuttles must be relied on for transit.

However, there are trends in bus and shuttle transit such as employer shuttles (discussed elsewhere in this paper) and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). BRT is a term applied to a variety of public transportation systems using buses to provide faster, more efficient service than an ordinary bus line, often achieved by making improvements to existing infrastructure, vehicles and scheduling. The goal of BRT is to approach the service quality of rail transit while still enjoying the cost savings and flexibility of bus transit. BRT typically involves high-frequency all-day service, dedicated bus-only lanes to allow buses to bypass traffic congestion, and preferential treatment of buses at intersections involving the extension of green time or actuation of the green light upon detection of an approaching bus. Given sufficient densities, a BRT in Foster City could provide an efficient and reliable connection to regional transit such as Caltrain or BART.

Residential Renovations and Additions

As peninsula neighborhoods have aged and property values have risen over the years, there has been interest on the part of many single family dwelling owners to expand their homes with second story additions, or tear them down to build new, larger homes. While this trend is also seen in older neighborhoods throughout the country, the high property costs and the modest sizes of many smaller homes on the Peninsula has made the trend particularly prevalent locally.

There are numerous reasons why a homeowner may wish to expand or replace an existing home:
- There may be a desire to remain in the neighborhood, particularly if the neighborhood has positive qualities and if friends are nearby. A remodeling or rebuilding project allows a homeowner to have a home more suited to their needs without moving to a different neighborhood or city.
- A large-scale remodel is considered a method to add to the value of a house. Even a smaller remodeling project such as a new kitchen or bathroom can increase a home's resale value substantially.
- Sometimes growing families need an extra bedroom and bath, and remodeling is cheaper than buying new.
- There may be a desire to accommodate extended family members, who may either live in the house or live elsewhere but visit frequently.
- Depending on the scale of the project, staying in place and remodeling an existing home can allow retention of a historically lower tax assessment under Proposition 13, as opposed to selling and moving to another home with a higher assessment.

While remodeling and rebuilding projects can contribute benefits to the homeowner and neighborhood, there are also potential problems. The enlarged and newly built homes can cause conflicts in terms of size, privacy, shadows, and architectural styles that may not be consistent with surrounding homes. Derisive terms such as "Monster Houses," "McMansions," "blockbusters," and "starter castles" have been used by critics to describe homes that are particularly out of character with their surrounding neighborhood.

On the Peninsula, neighborhood protection has been a priority for decades, and a number of cities have design standards and guidelines that specifically address second story additions. For example, San Mateo, Burlingame, Palo Alto, Mountain View, and Los Gatos each have highly detailed, descriptive standards and guidelines that address the many intricacies of single family additions and rebuilding projects. Among the issues commonly addressed:
- Site planning to reinforce the neighborhood's existing patterns, particularly with regards to setbacks.
- Neighborhood compatibility for height, mass and scale.
- Architectural form, massing, roof lines, and design elements.
- Placement of second story windows and decks for privacy.

Examples of homes with second-story additions in Foster City.

Foster City has had its own share of additions, as well as a few rebuilding projects. However, a critical distinction with neighboring communities is the size of existing homes relative to the size of the lots. In neighboring communities, older homes may be relatively small compared to the size of the lot, so in theory there is room for expansion. In Foster City's residential neighborhoods, conversely, homes are often already built close to or up to the minimum lot setbacks, and yards are already relatively small. This presents challenges for expanding an existing home since there is relatively little or no yard area to expand into. Some applicants have requested variances to setback requirements to allow expansion into setback areas, but allowing exceptions would have policy implications and could impact quality of life.

Given the challenges for expanding outward, a more feasible alternative for Foster City homeowners might be to add a second story addition to an existing single story home, or enlarge the second story of an existing two-story home. This presents compatibility issues in terms of size, privacy, shadows, and architectural styles. Many Foster City neighborhoods have distinctive architectural styles, so decisions would need to address whether to allow deviations or require consistency.

The update of the Land Use & Circulation Element provides an opportunity to modify or refine policy on this emerging issue. Policies can provide rationale and formalize the City's position on yard encroachments, view impacts and size of additions and provide a basis for changes to the existing residential design guidelines for additions and rebuilding projects.

Senior Housing

As the American population ages, development of senior housing strategies and services have been critical to meeting the needs of a growing senior community. From 1990 to 2008, the largest population increase on the national level was seen in the 55-64 year range, up 59.3 percent from less than two decades earlier.

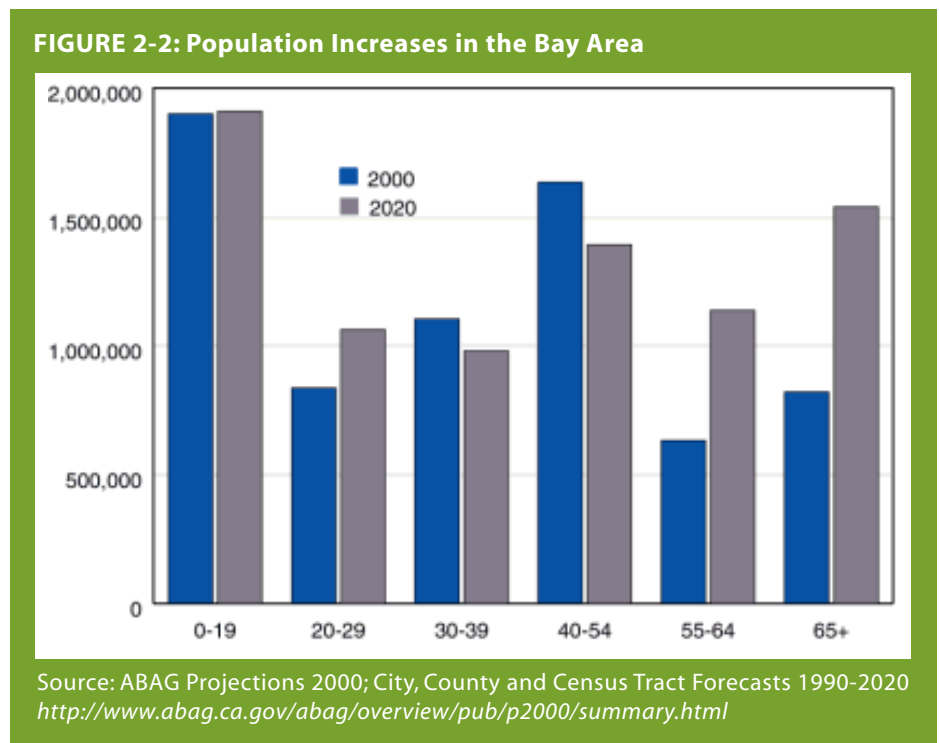**TABLE 2-8: POPULATION INCREASES ON A NATIONAL LEVEL [9]**

	1990	2000	2008	Percent Change 1990-2008
0-19 years	71,321,886	80,473,265	82,640,086	15.9%
20-34 years	62,196,244	58,855,725	61,990,546	-0.3%
35-54 years	62,801,989	82,826,479	86,873,195	38.3%
55-64 years	21,147,923	24,274,684	33,686,181	59.3%
65+ years	31,241,831	34,991,753	38,869,716	24.4%

Foster City has shared this trend. In 2008, nearly 23 percent of Foster City residents were 55 years of age or older – a seven percent increase since 1990. [10]

TABLE 2-9: OLDER ADULTS AND SENIORS IN FOSTER CITY

	1990	2000	2008	Percent Change 1990-2008
55-64 years	8.9%	11.4%	11.7%	2.8%
65+ years	7.0%	10.1%	11.2%	4.2%

It is anticipated that from 2000 to 2020, in the Bay Area, the largest population shift will occur in the 65+ years and older range.

FIGURE 2-2: Population Increases in the Bay Area

Source: ABAG Projections 2000; City, County and Census Tract Forecasts 1990-2020
http://www.abag.ca.gov/abag/overview/pub/p2000/summary.html

[9,10] U.S. Census, 1990-2000 and U.S. Census American Community Survey 2008

To meet the increased demand in senior housing, a number of senior housing options are available. These options include:

Retirement Living

Also known as Adult Communities, most retirement living neighborhoods or developments are restricted to seniors older than 55 years of age. Many of these retirement neighborhoods focus around common interests such as golf or tennis, and are designed for individuals who want a private lifestyle at home, have minimal health concerns, but want to enjoy their retirement with others.

Independent Living

For seniors who do not require medical care, independent living arrangements takes care of providing balanced meals, laundry services, and basic household chores. Independent living provides the opportunity for a private lifestyle at home, usually in the form of single family homes, townhouses, and duplexes, with the opportunity to participate in group activities at a centralized location.

Assisted Living

For seniors who can remain independent in some respects but cannot live on their own safely, assisted living facilities provide amenities which include prepared meals, laundry, transportation services, medicinal assistance, emergency call service, and licensed nursing. Assisted living usually takes the form of apartment complexes and converted homes.

Continuing Care

Continuing care communities, also known as life-care communities, provide a wide range of housing and service choices as a senior's needs and health changes. This type of community eliminates the need to move to a new community at a later age by including provisions for an increased level of medical services as needed. Continuing care takes the form of a wide array of housing options ranging from single family homes to nursing facilities, depending on the level of care required.

Examples of senior housing developments: Metro Center Senior Homes in Foster City (left), and Agesong in Emeryville.

Geographical area served by Beacon Hill Village, a pioneering age-in-place "village" in Boston, MA.

Senior Age-in-Place / "Virtual Village" Programs

In focus groups conducted for the General Plan Update, participants routinely remarked that they would like to continue to reside in Foster City as they age. Some of these individuals have lived in Foster City for many years (even decades) and would like to remain in the community through their senior years. If necessary, they would change dwellings to accommodate physical limitations such as stairs or proximity to services.

A senior living development such as the Mirabella project that had been planned would be appealing to some existing residents who wish to remain in the community in a supportive environment. Some focus group attendees had reserved units at Mirabella, and would welcome a similar type of development if it were to be available in the future. There are also senior apartments in the Metro Center development, but not enough units to accommodate future demand based on population trends.

"Age in place" is a concept that has been gaining interest nationally as the large Baby Boomer population demographic ages. The desire to remain in one's existing community as one ages has been expressed in communities across the country. AARP research shows that 90 percent of people want to grow old in their home and community. [11]

While moving to a senior housing development within the community would be one option, people have been looking at alternatives that would allow them to remain in their existing homes but with access to the types of supportive services that would be found in a senior living situation. Transportation if one can no longer drive or does not wish to drive, access to health care, services, and companionship are some of the considerations that need to be arranged as one ages.

Age-in-place programs are sometimes referred to as "Virtual Retirement Villages" or "Villages" for short, referring to a pioneering age in place program called Beacon Hill Village established in the Beacon Hill neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts. The "village" is not a place or physical structure, but a collection of neighbors working together. The concept was started in 2001 when neighbors in Boston's Beacon Hill Village neighborhood decided to band together to help each other with services, social activities, and more, allowing them to live independently in their own homes. Beacon Hill Village has become a model for age-in-place programs across the country, and there are now more than 50 Villages in the U.S.

[11] 'Villages' let elderly grow old at home, USA Today, July 26, 2010

A Village is a community based membership organization run by the users to provide a variety of services and programs to the members. Some Villages have age requirements, while others do not. Essentially, it is a concierge style service where one phone call can access any service. A board of directors oversees the Village, usually with members of the Village on the board. Beyond provision of services, villages also arrange social and cultural events.

A Village will have preapproved vendors for services who have been screened and qualified, and usually offer a discount to Village members. Services might include home maintenance, transportation, yard work, odd jobs, house cleaning, meal preparation and delivery, legal assistance, telephone check-ins, and healthcare providers. Annual dues are determined but are typically in the range of $600-900 for singles and $900-1200 for couples. Membership dues cover most, if not all, of the expenses. Some Villages fundraise annually to help keep dues low. Others fundraise only the amount needed to get the Village up and running and rely on membership dues after that. Some villages have paid staff members; others are run completely by volunteers. As nonprofit organizations, villages are typically operated by boards of directors that design and administer daily operations.

Organizing and operating such a village takes perseverance and time. Establishing a Village in Foster City would start with community outreach to educate and recruit the public. Generally establishing a Village needs to be a grass roots movement with the end users creating the Village, not the board of directors or a group of vendors. The next step would be to set up a focus groups to conduct demographic studies, establish a budget, write a business plan, and develop a handbook. Then the Village would need to establish a board, work with Community Foundations for funding, and establish the Village itself.

Currently the nearest Virtual Retirement Villages to Foster City are Avenidas Village in Palo Alto, which was formed in 2007, and San Francisco Village which was formed in 2009. Reston, Virginia, a master-planned community outside Washington D.C. contemporary with Foster City, has been working on establishing a village program since last year. Given the physical and demographic similarities between Foster City and Reston, the Reston village endeavor could serve as a model for Foster City.

Avenidas Village is a local virtual retirement village, headquartered in this building in Downtown Palo Alto.

Retail Trends

The original master plan for Foster City was influenced by the "neighborhood unit" concept, where cities were comprised of a series of neighborhood units, each with its own school, park, and shopping facilities. The neighborhood unit concept first emerged in the 1920s and was popularized through the remainder of the century. Shopping and services for neighborhood units are typically accommodated in neighborhood shopping centers such as those found interspersed throughout Foster City.

In recent decades, retail trends have evolved in ways that can be at odds with the neighborhood unit concept. Supermarkets and other "anchor" retailers such as pharmacies and general merchandise stores have steadily shifted away from small, neighborhood-oriented stores in favor of fewer, larger stores that serve several neighborhoods or communities. "Big box" retail has also shifted retail sales away from neighborhood shopping centers. Retailers have also increasingly put an importance on high visibility to a large range of potential customers, with a preference for locating in highly visible locations adjacent to busy highways and arterial roadways rather than in less visible neighborhood locations.

As anchor retailers consolidate and move away from neighborhood shopping centers, their departure can have devastating effects on the business of the remaining shopping center tenants. In Foster City, the former Port O' Call Shopping Center and Marlin Cove Shopping Center each suffered when the anchor tenants moved to new locations elsewhere, and both shopping centers were ultimately redeveloped.

In the past two decades there has also been a shift in shoppers' preferences away from shopping centers in favor of "main street" environments that emulate the experience of a downtown. In these main street-style configurations (sometimes referred to by the trade term "lifestyle centers"), stores are oriented directly to surrounding streets rather than parking lots, or are oriented towards internal roadways that are designed to have the appearance of a public streets. Wide sidewalks are provided in front of stores, and are outfitted with shade trees, benches, and outdoor dining. The concept is to provide an environment that is perceived to be more varied and lively than what might be associated with a shopping center. Main street / lifestyle centers have been particularly popular in suburban locations where traditional downtown districts did not originally exist.

"Lifestyle centers" emulate the feeling of a downtown Main Street with storefronts oriented to streets and sidewalks.

Like the shift of anchor stores away from neighborhood shopping centers, the shift in preference towards street-oriented downtown-style environments has presented a challenge to neighborhood shopping centers. Many neighborhood shopping centers, such as Foster City's Charter Square, were designed with stores oriented around a series of internal pedestrian walkways and courtyards, with the parking removed to the edges of the center. While the internal walkways and courtyards were designed to provide a pleasant refuge for shoppers, over time they have come to be seen as isolated from activity and less desirable from a retailing perspective. In such instances, retailers have preferred to locate in storefronts facing the parking lots rather than facing internal spaces. Storefronts facing internal spaces can be difficult or impossible to lease.

These trends – anchor retailers consolidating into fewer, larger locations, together with shoppers' preferences towards main street environments – have been seen in neighborhood shopping centers throughout the country. There are generally two different directions neighborhood shopping centers take in response to the changes:

Redevelopment

An increasing number of neighborhood shopping centers that have lost their anchor tenants and/or are considered to have an obsolete layout have been redeveloped with new configurations and/or land uses. A dated shopping center with inwardly-oriented stores surrounded by parking may be partially or completely demolished and replaced with new street-oriented spaces. Alternatively, the commercial land use may be replaced by an entirely new land use, such as in with Foster City's Port O' Call Shopping Center where the entire shopping center was replaced with a multifamily residential development. Another option is to retain commercial uses but add additional uses, such as at Marlin Cove where a large shopping center was replaced with a newer, more contemporary shopping center together with apartments and offices.

Retenanting

The other scenario is a shift to a more unconventional mix of tenants, such as ethnic-oriented businesses, arts business, and community organizations. While in some instances these shifts can be indicative of a center's decline, in other cases it can lead to a type of renaissance where the shopping center gains new purpose and is reinvirgorated. There are examples of shopping centers that have been successfully retenanted with an appealing range of ethnic restaurants; other examples include art galleries and community performance spaces that would not be able to afford the rents of a downtown or prime-commercial location.

Marlin Cove (above) and the former Port O' Call Shopping Center in Foster City were redeveloped as reconfigured mixed use and residential respectively.

Employer Shuttles

Links to Regional Transit

Foster City has a number of employee shuttles providing linkages from some of the City's larger employers to regional transportation such as Caltrain and BART. The shuttles are typically operated through the ALLIANCE shuttle program sponsored by employers. Shuttle service includes:

Foster City employee shuttle.

> Foster City-Lincoln Centre Caltrain – This shuttle runs between the Hillsdale Caltrain Station and businesses in the Lincoln Centre Area in North Foster City during commute hours.
>
> Mariners' Island Caltrain – This shuttle runs between the Hillsdale Caltrain Station to the businesses in the San Mateo and Foster City border areas during commute hours.
>
> North Foster City – This shuttle runs between the Millbrae Intermodal BART & Caltrain Station and businesses in the North Foster City Area during commute hours.

In terms of private shuttles, Visa has company-operated shuttles that go to Caltrain and to their San Francisco offices. Visa is the only FC business that operates private shuttles currently.

Additionally, there are also a number of vanpools in operation at some of the larger employers. Typically, vanpools are organized through Enterprise Vanpool. The arrangement involves leasing a van to a designated driver, who then coordinates the pool.

Employer Point-to-Point Shuttles

During commute hours, steady streams of motor coaches can be seen heading down Highways 101 and 280, shuttling employees between major Silicon Valley employers and population centers in San Francisco and the East Bay where concentrations of their employees live. In recent years, there has been significant growth of shuttle operations, especially private employer-provided regional shuttles which provide direct service to the employment site from either residential neighborhood stops, or from a major transit hub (e.g. BART, Muni, or Caltrain station). Major employers include Google, Yahoo!, Apple, Genentech, LinkedIn, Facebook, eBay, and others from the Peninsula and South Bay (Silicon Valley).

In the mornings, each shuttle follows a local route through San Francisco and the East Bay, picking up riders at a number of designated locations and then expressing down the freeways directly to the employer's campus in the South Bay. The routine is then repeated in reverse at the end of the work day. Typically each shuttle serves only one employer, so except for the local stops in the residential areas the service is door-to-door. The coaches are late-model and fitted with amenities such as spacious seating, wi-fi internet, and restrooms.

Employers offer point-to-point shuttle services for a range of other reasons, including:

- To address rising commute times due to increased traffic congestion;
- To fill service gaps and other inadequacies in traditional local and regional transit;
- To recruit and retain a highly skilled workforce who may value living in an urban center and thus be attracted by an easy commute to the distant site away from the main urban core;
- To increase the productivity of employees by offering wi-fi service on shuttle buses;
- To discourage driving due to a shortage of on-site parking spaces; and
- In some cases as a response to mandatory planning stipulations as a condition of original site development.[12]

Many of the Silicon Valley employment centers served by the point-to-point shuttles are not particularly well connected to regional mass transit, located well away from Caltrain and BART. In this respect there are similarities to Foster City's employment centers, which are convenient to regional highways but not particularly convenient to regional mass transit. While some employers offer shuttles to Caltrain like those found in Foster City, the point-to-point shuttles offer an added measure of convenience and amenities for employees. For employers, the shuttles offer both a transportation demand management option as well as a recruitment perk.

Employer shuttles for Yahoo! (top) and Genentech employees.

To be feasible, point-to-point shuttles require a large enough pool of employees travelling between two destinations. Large technology companies such as Google, Yahoo, and Apple each have a large enough "critical mass" of employees travelling from San Francisco or the East Bay, but it is unknown whether such a critical mass currently exists for employers in Foster City. However, in the future the point-to-point model might offer a possibility for accommodating growth of larger employers in Foster City as a more appealing alternative to the local Caltrain and BART shuttles.

[12] Phone interviews with regional shuttle providers, as reported in the San Francisco County Transportation Authority report "Strategic Analysis Report: The Role of Shuttle Services in San Francisco's Transportation System."

Business incubators and virtual offices offer the benefits of networking and mentoring with low overhead costs.

Business Incubators and Virtual Offices

The concept of a business incubator is for start-up entrepreneurs to set up shop in a single location, known as an "incubator." Rent is discounted or free, and each business has access to legal professionals, business consultants, and investors who help them overcome the obstacles that all new ventures face. Then, properly nurtured, the businesses would be transition into the real world as fully formed companies.

Incubators were particularly popular in the late 1990s, as thousands of entrepreneurs flooded into high-tech incubators such as Idealab in Pasadena and the Austin Technology Institute. After a brief downturn when the tech economy crashed in the early 2000s, incubators have returned. What is significant is that many of them have been quietly reinventing the way they nurture start-ups and are now much more accessible to entrepreneurs looking for expert advice at bargain prices.

The significant change in business incubators from the 1990s is that they increasingly are going "virtual," no longer requiring companies to set up shop on-site. Instead they are focusing on connecting a wide swath of local entrepreneurs with top-notch experts and mentors. Virtual incubators have lower overhead, which often translates into cost savings for entrepreneurs. And since they offer exposure to a wider network of companies, they tend to attract more skilled experts. A virtual incubator can allow a start-up access to business plan consulting and legal services for as little as one-tenth the cost of arranging the services independently. [13]

Establishing a virtual incubator could be an option for encouraging entrepreneurship in Foster City. There may be opportunities to nurture spin-offs from existing large employers, as well as possibilities to develop new business sectors that are not currently represented but where there is market potential. Where the last generation of incubators focused almost exclusively on technology businesses, the new breed is more likely to welcome a variety of companies.

[13] Darren Dahl, "Percolating Profits: A new generation of 'virtual' business incubators is jump-starting start-ups nationwide." Inc. Magazine, February 1, 2005

Sustainable Retrofits

When Foster City was planned in the 1960s, it represented the state-of-the art in city planning and architectural design. As its neighborhoods developed over the next forty years, each has in turn represented progressive trends in development, from zero-lot line detached homes such as Whaler's Island and the attached rowhouses of Cityhomes, to mixed use commercial developments such as Vintage Park and Metro Center.

As a development ages, there inevitably comes a time when a significant retrofit is necessary. For residential developments, this may entail replacement of roofing and siding, windows, landscaping, or hardscapes. However, the technologies and materials that were state-of-the-art when the project was originally built may not be anymore, particularly with respect to energy efficiency and sustainability. The City may be asked to consider a wider variety of replacement materials in order to improve energy efficiency and sustainability that may not be as consistent with the original building design.

Concerns about resource depletion and global warming are changing the dynamics and scope of the building code profession in the United States, with more and more jurisdictions across the country adopting measures to encourage (or require) "green" building features in new construction and in the renovation projects of existing structures. The use of green building ordinances is gaining greater acceptance as a means to counteract these problems. The development and adoption of green building ordinances at the local level is an effective way to implement changes in the construction process when done in a manner that includes participation by a variety of stakeholders and utilizes a range of private sector resources.

The City of Rohnert Park in Sonoma County provides an interesting case study for Foster City. Rohnert Park is contemporary with Foster City, developed with similar planning principles and has a building stock with similar characteristics. In 2005, Rohnert Park joined the other eight cities in Sonoma County in agreeing to pursue the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions throughout the community to 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2015 (after having already set the goal the previous year of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by city government operations by 20 percent of 2000 levels). Following a great deal of research and collaborative effort, city staff succeeded in developing a Green Building Ordinance which was subsequently adopted by the Rohnert Park City Council effective July 1, 2007.

As a development ages, there inevitably comes a time when a significant retrofit is necessary. This presents an opportunity to improve a structure's energy and resource efficiency.

Rohnert Park's ordinance is mandatory rather than voluntary, so that it places less of a demand on city resources and results in greater numbers of green buildings. While there are multiple voluntary green building programs in use across the United States, there are few that require the mandatory use of green building features. Rohnert Park modeled its ordinance after one adopted by the City of Pleasanton, which saved a great amount of time during the initial development process.

One of the most important lessons learned during the development of Rohnert Park's Green Building Ordinance was the value of the public process. The more opportunities people were given to be heard, the more the ordinance gained in public support.

Rohnert Park staff held several public meetings with the City Council and Planning Commission, including a Sustainability Workshop that attracted individuals with interests focused on concerns such as water conservation, transportation, solid waste management and universal design, as well as green building advocates. This workshop led to the creation of a new "Sustainability" title in the city's Municipal Code which, once established, will contain the requirements for most issues related to the subject. This outreach and involvement is not unlike that of the Environmental Sustainability Task Force in Foster City.

Rohnert Park is also a useful reference in the relationship of its green building ordinance to the update of its General Plan. At a previous council meeting in 2006 when staff presented an update on the development of a green building ordinance, Council included direction to consider the inclusion of a Sustainability Element when the next General Plan update is done. Along these lines, Foster City could pursue the recommendations of the Environmental Sustainability Task Force including development of a green building ordinance, together with either adding sustainability components to the Land Use & Transportation Element, or creating a new Sustainability Element.

Complete Streets

The term "complete streets" refers to roadways designed and operated to enable safe, attractive, and comfortable access and travel for all users – not just motorists. The concept is to provide parity between pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and public transport users of all ages and abilities rather than have one mode favored over the others.

The California Complete Streets Act (Assembly Bill 1358) mandates complete streets goals, policies, and programs be included in General Plans. Commencing January 1, 2011, upon any substantive revision of the circulation element, cities must modify the circulation element to provide for complete streets. This refers to a balanced, multimodal transportation network that meets the needs of all users of streets, roads, and highways for safe and convenient travel.

The State has provided an update to the Circulation Element section of the 2003 General Plan Guidelines to meet the requirements of Assembly Bill 1358. The guidelines specify that the circulation element be modified to plan for a balanced, multimodal transportation network that meets the needs of all users of streets, roads, and highways. The statute defines all users of streets, roads, and highways as bicyclists, children, persons with disabilities, motorists, movers of commercial goods, pedestrians, users of public transportation, and seniors.

The concept of a complete street varies by context depending on whether the environment is urban, suburban, or rural. This could include policies and implementation measures for both retrofitting and developing streets to serve multiple modes and the development of multimodal transportation network design standards based on street types appropriate to the urban context.

"Complete streets" are designed to enable safe, attractive, and comfortable access and travel for all users – not just motorists.

In general, Foster City streets have been designed to accommodate a range of users, so the concept of complete streets is not unfamiliar. Refinements over the years such as the addition of bicycle lanes and the reduction of speed limits to accommodate small electric vehicles has furthered the concept of complete streets for suitable for multiple users. The State's updated General Plan Guidelines identifies policy areas for complete streets, many of which are already included to some extent in the existing Foster City General Plan such as:

- The availability of a mix of transportation modes to meet community needs;
- Consideration of bicycle lanes and/or shared lanes as a standard street design principle;
- The consideration of transit accessibility as a standard street design principle;
- Traffic calming;
- The accessibility and accommodation of bicycle and pedestrian traffic on major thoroughfares;
- The development and improvement of transit and paratransit services;
- The connectivity of pedestrian and bicycle routes between homes, job centers, schools and facilities, and other frequently visited destinations;
- The provision of bicycle parking;
- The development of street tree, green median, and landscape standards for pedestrian and bicycle paths and trails;
- The inclusion of street trees as a street design standard.

The Guidelines also acknowledge a linkage between land use and transportation, with suggestions of policy areas that relate to complete streets. Those that are applicable to Foster City include:

- The creation of land use patterns, such as mixed use overlay districts, that allow frequently visited destinations to be accessible by multiple transportation modes;
- The availability of transportation infrastructure needed to accommodate increased density and transit oriented development.

New concepts that could be further developed to implement complete streets include:

Sharrows

A sharrow is a roadway that is shared by both cars and bicycle, rather than having separate bicycle lanes. The roadway has special "sharrow" arrow markings to alert cars to take caution and allow cyclists to safely travel in these roadway. Sharrows are typically incorporated where the roadway does not have sufficient width for a bicycle lane, but there is a need or desire to make accommodations for bicycles.

Sharrow

Bicycle Boulevard

A bicycle boulevard is a low-speed street which has been optimized for bicycle traffic. Bicycle boulevards discourage cut-through motor vehicle traffic, but typically allow local motor vehicle traffic. They are designed to give priority to cyclists as through-going traffic, with a distinctive look and/or ambiance so that cyclists are aware of the bike boulevard and motorists are alerted that the street is a priority route for bicyclists. The design elements are intended to appeal to casual, risk-averse, inexperienced and younger cyclists who would not otherwise be willing to cycle with motor vehicle traffic. Compared to a bike path or rail trail, a bicycle boulevard is also a relatively low cost approach to appealing to a broader cycling demographic. Existing roadways with high levels of bicycle traffic can be retrofitted to become bicycle boulevards.

Bicycle Boulevard

Green Streets

Green Streets transform impervious street surfaces into landscaped green spaces that capture stormwater runoff and let water soak into the ground as plants and soil filter pollutants. Green Streets convert stormwater from a waste directed into a pipe, to a resource that replenishes groundwater supplies. They also create attractive streetscapes and urban green spaces, provide natural habitat, and help connect neighborhoods, schools, parks, and business districts.

Green Street

The update of the Land Use and Circulation Element provides the opportunity to develop these concepts through goals, policies, and programs.

Using the Trends Analysis in the General Plan Update

This chapter has identified trends and issues that are applicable to the update of Foster City's Land Use and Circulation Element. Some of the trends represent obligatory requirements that must be accounted for in the Land Use and Circulation Element, such as Complete Streets.

Other trends such as Virtual Retirement Villages and Virtual Business Incubators are emerging trends that city leaders may or may not wish to pursue further based on whether they are considered to be in the interest of the community. Trends such as sustainability and retrofits are issues that have already been investigated by the community, and for which the update of the Land Use and Circulation Element provides an opportunity to officially incorporate into the City's long-term planning.